

3. Who am I?

Who are you?... Are you your body? Or your mind? Or are you something higher? Do you know who you are, or do you merely think you know? And does it really matter? Our materialistic society, with its unenlightened leadership, has made it virtually taboo to inquire into our real, higher self. Instead we use our valuable time maintaining, decorating, and pampering the body for its own sake. Might there be an alternative?.

The first step is to know the difference between a living body and a dead body. What is the difference? The difference is that when someone dies, the spirit soul, or the living force, leaves the body. And therefore the body is called "dead." So, there are two things: one, this body; and the other, the living force within the body. We speak of the living force within the body. That is the difference between the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is spiritual, and ordinary material science. As such, in the beginning it is very, very difficult for an ordinary man to appreciate our movement. One must first understand that he is a soul, or something other than his body.

You can understand at any moment, but it requires a little intelligence. For example, as a child grows, he becomes a boy, the boy becomes a young man, the young man becomes an adult, and the adult becomes an old man. Throughout all this time, although his body is changing from a child to an old man, he still feels himself to be the same person, with the same identity. Just see: the body is changing, but the occupier of the body, the soul, is remaining the same. So we should logically conclude that when our present body dies, we get another body. This is called transmigration of the soul.

The first thing is to understand that you are a spirit soul. And because you are a spirit soul, you are changing your body. This is the ABC of spiritual understanding. So, when your body is finished, annihilated, you are not finished. You get another body, just as you may change your coat and shirt. If you come to see me tomorrow wearing a different shirt and a different coat, does that mean you are a different person? No. Similarly, each time you die you change bodies, but you, the spirit soul within the body, remain the same. This point has to be understood; then one can make further progress in the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The spirit soul is invisible to our material eyes. It is atomic in size. After the destruction of the gross body, which is made up of the senses, blood, bone, fat, and so forth, the subtle body of mind, intelligence, and ego goes on working. So at the time of death this subtle body carries the small spirit soul to another gross body. The process is just like air carrying a fragrance. Nobody can see where this rose fragrance is coming from, but we know that it is being carried by the air. You cannot see how, but it is being done. Similarly, the process of transmigration of the soul is very subtle. According to the condition of the mind at the time of death, the minute spirit soul enters into the womb of a particular mother through the semen of a father, and then the soul develops a particular type of body given by the mother. It may be a human being, it may be a cat, a dog, or anything.

The soul is present in the heart of the living entity, and it is the source of all the energies for maintaining the body. The energy of the soul is spread all over the body, and this is known as consciousness. Since this consciousness spreads the energy of the soul all over the body, one can feel pains and pleasures in any part of the body. The soul is individual, and he is transmigrating from one body to another, just as a person transmigrates from babyhood to childhood, from childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to youth, and then to advanced old age. Then the change called death takes place when we change to a new body, just as we change our old dress to a new dress. This is called transmigration of the soul.

People should first be taught what they are. Are they their bodies, or something else? That is the beginning of education. Now everyone is educated to think he is his body. Because someone accidentally gets an American body, he thinks, "I am an American." This is just like thinking, "I am a red shirt," just because you are wearing a red shirt. You are not a red shirt; you are a human being. Similarly, this body is like a shirt or coat over the real person--the spirit soul. If we recognize ourselves simply by our bodily "shirt" or "coat," then we have no spiritual education.

(Adapted from Science of Self realization Chapters 1 & 2)

Discovery

1. What is the difference between a living and a dead body?
2. What are the different transformations that happen to a person in the course of his life? From infancy to death?

Understanding

1. Is it difficult to perceive the fact that we are something other than the body? Why?
2. How can we understand that though we grow from infancy to old age still we are the same person?

3. Can we understand the fact that the soul is transmigrating?

Application

When we lose someone who is dear to us why are we affected so much?

SRI NAMAMRTA

The processes of jñāna, yoga, meditation and pious activities are not as effective in cleansing the heart as chanting the holy name

Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam: [Cc. Antya 20.12] one has to cleanse his heart. There are different processes to cleanse the heart—the jñāna process, the yoga process, the meditation process, pious activities. Karma also cleanses the heart. If one acts very piously, his heart will gradually be cleansed. But although these processes are recommended for cleansing the heart, in this age they are all difficult. To follow the path of philosophical knowledge one must become a very learned scholar, one must read so many books, one must go to learned professors and scholars and speculate. One must search out a person who has seen the light. So these are all philosophical processes. Meditation is also a recommended process. One should question, "What am I?" Just consider: Am I this body? No. Am I this finger? No, this is my finger. If you contemplate your leg, you will see, "Oh, this is my leg." Similarly, you will find everything to be "mine." And where is that "I"? Everything is mine, but where is that "I"? When one is searching for that "I," that is meditation. Real meditation means concentrating all the senses in that way. But that meditation process is very difficult. One must control the senses. The senses are dragging one outward, and one has to bring them inward for introspection. Therefore there are eight processes in the yoga system. The first is controlling the senses by regulative principles. Then sitting postures—that will help to concentrate the mind. If one sits leaning over, that will not help; if one sits up straight, that will help. Then controlling the breathing, then meditation, then samādhi. But today these are very, very difficult processes. No one can immediately perform them. The so-called yoga processes are fragmental—only the sitting postures and a few breathing exercises are practiced. But that cannot bring one to the perfectional stage. The actual yoga process, although a recommended Vedic process, is very difficult in this age. Similarly one can try to get knowledge by the speculative philosophical process: "This is Brahman, this is not Brahman, so what is Brahman? What is spirit soul?" Such empiric philosophical discussion is also recommended, but it is useless in this age. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu—not only Caitanya Mahāprabhu but also the Vedic literature—says:

harer nāma harer nāma / harer nāmaiva kevalam

kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva / nāsty eva gatir anyathā [Cc. Ādi 17.21]

Kalau means "in this age." Nāsty eva, nāsty eva, nāsty eva—three times nāsty eva. Eva means "certainly," and nāsti means "not." "Certainly not, certainly not, certainly not." What is that "certainly not"? One cannot realize oneself by karma. That is the first "certainly not." One cannot realize oneself by jñāna. That is the second "certainly not." One cannot realize oneself by yoga. Certainly not. Kalau. Kalau means "in this age." Kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā. In this age one certainly cannot achieve success by any of these three methods. Then what is the recommended process? Harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam. Simply chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Kevalam means "only." Simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. It is the easiest and most sublime process. This is recommended, practical, and authorized. So take it. Accept it in any condition of life. Chant. There is no expenditure, there is no loss. We are not chanting a secret. No. It is open. And by chanting you will cleanse your heart. (The Science of Self-Realization)

PREACHING IS THE ESSENCE

Preaching the knowledge of the living entity's spiritual existence is the highest welfare work

... [the living entity] must preach this knowledge [of self-realization] after perfecting himself and understanding his own position as an eternal *Sevak* of Kṛṣṇa. Preaching this is showing real mercy to living entities. Other types of humanitarian work may be temporarily beneficial for the body, but because a living entity is spirit soul, ultimately one can show him real mercy only by revealing knowledge of his spiritual existence. As Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, *jīvera 'srarūpa' haya-kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa.'* "Every living entity is constitutionally a servant of Kṛṣṇa." One should know this fact perfectly and should preach it to the mass of people. (SB 4.29.1b)